

My name is Matt Gooding, I am a manager on my family farm that was established in 1894 and we raise various crops such as grass seed, hazelnuts, sugar beets, radish, kale, spinach, silage corn and wheat. I am speaking on behalf of all small family farms that are becoming few and far between as time goes on. More and more small family farms are forced to sell their operations whether it be due to economic hardship, lack of succession, overbearing government regulation or what have you. Every year it seems, the state of Oregon passes new regulations onto Agriculture that make it more and more difficult to operate. These new regulations are always harder for small family farms to implement and manage than large corporate farms. The large farms have the man-power, money, and resources to either implement such regulations or can afford lawyers to find ways around them. Farms like mine, however, cannot. Our man-power consists of my mother, father, myself and one full-time employee.

Please oppose HB 2548. This is a very negative bill for farm employers. Oregon already has some of the highest labor costs in the country. Farmers generally don't get to set prices for their commodities, so there is no way to recover the increased cost passed by the new governing Board. Farm workers are currently protected by very strong workplace regulations such as paid sick time and minimum wage. Oregon OSHA has one of the highest worksite inspection rates and has adopted some of the most expansive workplace protections in the country. What real issue is this bill trying to solve?

HB 2548 gives unelected bureaucrats the power to set wages and safety rules that go far beyond current protections, adding more regulatory and cost burden to farms. There is no accountability for the decisions they make, even if their decisions ultimately close farms or result in layoffs. I am strongly opposed to the proposal in HB 2548 that eliminates at-will employment for farms and ranches. HB 2548 carves out farms and puts us at risk for costly claims for making necessary staffing decisions. All other private sectors in Oregon enjoy at-will

status, but farms—whose employment needs are impacted by weather, yields, trade and market conditions, pests and diseases—would not. This is unfair.

This bill does not help workers or consumers; it just makes farming harder and more expensive. Many farms have already had to reduce worker hours, change crops, or automate to control labor costs associated with overtime; HB 2548 would have more severe consequences. I urge you to vote no on HB 2548 to protect Oregon farms and ranches and the jobs we currently provide.

Thank you.